

# A Probabilistic Model for Assistive Robotics Devices to Support Activities of Daily Living

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June 2014

# Declaration of Authorship

I, Mitesh Patel, declare that this thesis entitled ‘*A Probabilistic Model for Assistive Robotics Devices to Support Activities of Daily Living*’ and the work presented in it, is my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted from the work done by others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what contributions I have made to my thesis.

Signed:



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Date: June 13, 2014

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Research Problem . . . . .	1
1.2	Motivation . . . . .	2
1.3	Approach and Methodology . . . . .	4
1.4	Contributions . . . . .	6
1.5	Publications . . . . .	8
1.6	Thesis Overview . . . . .	9
<b>2</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1	Introduction . . . . .	12
2.2	Activities of Daily Living . . . . .	13
2.3	Challenges of Recognising Activities of Daily Living . . . . .	14
2.3.1	Representing ADLs using Dictionary of APs . . . . .	15
2.4	Probabilistic Models . . . . .	17
2.4.1	Bayesian Network . . . . .	19
2.4.2	Dynamic Bayesian Network . . . . .	19
2.4.3	Hierarchical Hidden Markov Models . . . . .	22
2.4.4	Learning . . . . .	27
2.4.5	Inference . . . . .	28
2.5	Summary . . . . .	28
<b>3</b>	<b>Modelling Activities of Daily Living using Topological Maps</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1	Introduction . . . . .	32

3.2	Related Work . . . . .	33
3.3	Capturing Navigational and Support Activities . . . . .	36
3.3.1	Locations of Interest . . . . .	37
3.4	Dictionary of Action Primitives . . . . .	37
3.5	Inferring ADLs using Probabilistic Models . . . . .	38
3.5.1	Layered Dynamic Bayesian Network (L-DBN) to model ADLs . .	39
3.5.2	Hierarchical Hidden Markov Model (HHMM) to model ADLs . .	39
3.6	Power Walker for Data Collection . . . . .	43
3.7	Results . . . . .	44
3.7.1	Evaluation using Synthetic Data . . . . .	44
3.7.2	Evaluation with Data Collected using Power Walker . . . . .	47
3.7.3	Validating Synthetic Data with Real Walker Data . . . . .	48
3.7.4	Comparison with Discriminative models . . . . .	50
3.7.5	Inferring ADLs and APs with HHMM framework using On-line Inference . . . . .	53
3.8	Summary . . . . .	56
<b>4</b>	<b>Modelling Activities of Daily Living using Human Motion Models</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Introduction . . . . .	57
4.2	Related Work . . . . .	59
4.3	Mobility Device to Support Activities of Daily Living . . . . .	61
4.3.1	Power Walker as a Mobility Device . . . . .	61
4.3.2	Robotic Wheelchair as a Mobility Device . . . . .	63
4.3.3	Modelling ADLs of Mobility Device User . . . . .	63
4.4	Probabilistic Models to Predict ADLs using Human Motion Models . .	65
4.4.1	Layered Dynamic Bayesian Network (L-DBN) . . . . .	65
4.4.2	Hierarchical Hidden Markov Model (HHMM) . . . . .	66
4.5	Data Collection . . . . .	69
4.6	Results . . . . .	71
4.6.1	Comparison with Discriminative Model . . . . .	73
4.6.2	Inferring ADLs and APs using On-line Inference . . . . .	74

4.7	Summary . . . . .	76
<b>5</b>	<b>Modelling Grasping and Manipulation Activities</b>	<b>79</b>
5.1	Introduction . . . . .	79
5.2	Related Work . . . . .	80
5.3	Modelling ADLs using Probabilistic Models . . . . .	83
5.3.1	Hierarchical Hidden Markov Model . . . . .	83
5.4	Data Collection . . . . .	86
5.5	Results . . . . .	88
5.5.1	Comparison with HHMM/SVM Hybrid Model . . . . .	91
5.6	Discussion . . . . .	94
5.6.1	<i>Missing Data</i> . . . . .	94
5.6.2	<i>Testing with unseen Activity Sequence</i> . . . . .	96
5.6.3	Unsupervised Learning . . . . .	97
5.7	Summary . . . . .	98
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>99</b>
6.1	Summary . . . . .	99
6.2	Future Research Direction . . . . .	101
6.2.1	Testing the Framework to Control Robots . . . . .	101
6.2.2	Enhancing the Probabilistic Framework . . . . .	102
6.2.3	Automatic Generation of Action Primitive (APs) structure . . . . .	103
6.3	Conclusion . . . . .	103
	<b>Appendix A Power Walker</b>	<b>105</b>
A.1	Gait Characteristics . . . . .	108
	<b>Appendix B Robotic Wheelchair</b>	<b>110</b>
	<b>Appendix C Software Framework</b>	<b>113</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>115</b>

# List of Tables

3.1	List of ADLs performed by a typical walker user. Paths represents the topological junction points visited to reach the goal destination . . . . .	48
3.2	Inference accuracy of Generative and Discriminative Models (%) . . . . .	51
4.1	Action Primitives to perform various ADLs . . . . .	64
4.2	Users Activity of Daily Living (ADLs) . . . . .	69
4.3	List of ADLs performed by users of both the mobility devices. APs represents the navigational cues provided through the user's motion . . .	70
4.4	ADLs Inferred by Generative and Discriminative Models (in Percentage)	70
4.5	Inference accuracy of Action Primitives by Generative and Discriminative Models (in Percentage) . . . . .	71
5.1	Hand and object features used by the HHMM framework . . . . .	85
5.2	Action Primitives to perform various activities . . . . .	86
5.3	Users' Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) . . . . .	87
A.1	Temporal-Distance Gait Parameters for each user . . . . .	108

# List of Figures

1.1	Changes in the Population Structure [ <a href="#">Congressional Budget Office, 2005</a> ]	3
1.2	Interaction between a human, a robotic agent and the environment . . .	5
1.3	Instrumented rollator walker and wheelchair used in our experiment. . .	7
2.1	Activity of going to work which has two options, a bus route and a car route. Solid lines indicates decomposition of the activity into APs for taking the bus route and the dotted lines indicates the same for taking the car route . . . . .	15
2.2	Activity of pouring water from a mug decomposed into a sequence of action primitives . . . . .	15
2.3	An example of a navigational activity decomposed by a GPS navigational system into directional navigational cues to guide a user to reach his/her intended destination . . . . .	16
2.4	Activity of visiting location of interest in an indoor environment using the support of a walker . . . . .	18
2.5	A spectrum of Markov process models along several dimensions: whether agents have a choice of action, whether states are observable or hidden and whether actions are unit-time (single step) or time-varying(multi-step) [ <a href="#">Mahadevan et al., 2004</a> ] . . . . .	18
2.6	DBN model unrolled infinitely over an infinite time period . . . . .	20



2.7	Example of a three level HHMM model where solid arcs represent horizontal transitions between states, and dotted arcs represent vertical transitions, i.e., connections between sub-HMMs. Double-ringed states represents end states (at least one per sub-HMM), where control flow is returned to the parent (calling) state. Each node at level 3 emits a single state based on the distribution over the observation space. . . . .	21
2.8	A 3-level HHMM model represented as Hierarchical-DBN Model. $Q_t^d$ is the state at time $t$ and level $d$ ; $F_t^d = 1$ if the sub-HMM at level $d$ has finished (entered exit mode), otherwise $F_t^d = 0$ . The nodes $O_t$ are observed nodes which can be a mixture of both Gaussian and discrete nodes. . . . .	23
3.1	A topological map structure of an office area representing a typical home setting is shown on top of the metric representations. Circle nodes in this structure represents a possible location of interest, rectangle nodes represents junction points in the topological map and line segments represent a viable physical path between two nodes. . . . .	36
3.2	Layered DBN model used to infer ADLs performed by walker user . . .	39
3.3	Time series of activities performed in sequence and their further decomposition into sequence of APs . . . . .	40
3.4	Hierarchical-DBN representation of a 2-level HHMM Framework used to infer ADLs. The horizontal dashed lines indicate levels of hierarchy . . .	40
3.5	Power Walker used as a Mobility Device . . . . .	42
3.6	2-D Bird's eye view of environment divided into typical locations of interest in an home, superimposed with different activity routines performed by one of the walker user . . . . .	44
3.7	The data plot shows a comparison between real sensor data and synthetic data generated while the user performs four basic primitive actions which are combined with other sensors to model the overall ADLs. . . . .	45
3.8	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred by HHMM Model at level 1 using synthetic data . . . . .	46

3.9	Confusion matrix for APs inferred by HHMM Model at level 2 using synthetic data . . . . .	46
3.10	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred by Layered DBN Model at level 1 using synthetic data . . . . .	47
3.11	Confusion matrix for APs inferred by Layered DBN Model at level 2 using synthetic data . . . . .	47
3.12	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred by HHMM Model at level 1 using real walker data . . . . .	49
3.13	Confusion matrix for APs inferred by HHMM Model at level 2 using real walker data . . . . .	49
3.14	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred by Layered DBN Model at level 1 using real walker data . . . . .	50
3.15	Confusion matrix for APs inferred by Layered DBN Model at level 2 using real walker data . . . . .	50
3.16	HHMM/SVM Hybrid model used to infer ADLs. The SVM classifies static user behaviour which acts as observations to the HHMM model which in turn are merged with other observation such as <i>LOC</i> and <i>RF</i> to infer the APs . . . . .	51
3.17	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred by HHMM/SVM Hybrid Model at Level 1 using real walker data . . . . .	52
3.18	Confusion matrix for APs inferred by HHMM/SVM Hybrid Model at Level 2 using real walker data . . . . .	52
3.19	Comparison of ADLs inferred by HHMM Model, HHMM/SVM Model, Layered DBN Model and SVM classifier . . . . .	53
3.20	Confusion matrix for ADLs inferred using on-line inference by HHMM Model at level 1 using real walker data . . . . .	54
3.21	Confusion matrix for APs inferred using on-line inference by HHMM Model at level 2 using real walker data . . . . .	54
3.22	Comparison of ADLs inferred by HHMM Model using off-line inference and on-line inference technique . . . . .	55

3.23	Probability inference of performing the ADL of going to the Laundry from Kitchen. Note that the inference is performed using the observation available till the current time. . . . .	55
4.1	(a) Power Walker and (b) Robotic Wheelchair used to model ADLs . . .	58
4.2	(a) Graphical Model defined manually to infer local human behaviour/activities (b) Graphical Model evolved using bayesian structure learning approach to infer local human behaviour/activities . . . . .	62
4.3	Time series of activities performed in sequence and their further decomposition into sequence of APs . . . . .	65
4.4	Layered DBN Model used to infer ADL for walker user (Figure (a)) and wheelchair user (Figure (b)) . . . . .	66
4.5	HHMM Model used to infer ADL for walker user (Figure (a)) and wheelchair user (Figure (b)) . . . . .	67
4.6	2D Bird's eye view of environment divided into typical locations of interest in an home, superimposed with navigational routines performed by one of the walker user. Wheelchair data was also collected on the same navigational routines that a user would perform . . . . .	71
4.7	Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by the HHMM Model for Walker user . . . . .	72
4.8	Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by the L-DBN Model for Walker user . . . . .	72
4.9	Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by HHMM Model for wheelchair user . . . . .	73
4.10	Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by L-DBN Model for wheelchair user . . . . .	73
4.11	2 Level SVM Model used to infer ADLs of walker user (Figure (a)) and wheelchair user (Figure (b)) . . . . .	74
4.12	Comparison of ADLs inferred by HHMM, L-DBN and SVM Classifier for walker and wheelchair user . . . . .	75

4.13 Comparison of APs inferred by HHMM, L-DBN and SVM Classifier for walker and wheelchair user . . . . .	75
4.14 Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by HHMM model using on-line inference for walker user . . . . .	76
4.15 Confusion Matrix of ADLs and APs inferred by HHMM model using on-line inference for wheelchair user . . . . .	76
4.16 Comparison of ADLs and APs inferred by HHMM framework using off-line and on-line inference for walker and wheelchair user . . . . .	77
4.17 Probability evolution of inferring ADL of going to the Laundry from Bedroom. Note that the inference is performed using the observation available till the current time. . . . .	77
5.1 Activity of <i>Pouring</i> water from mug subdivided into action primitives. Each image depicts the output of hand-object tracking algorithm. . . . .	80
5.2 HHMM Model used to infer action primitives and long term user activities using hand and object features (described in Table 5.1) . . . . .	82
5.3 Time taken by each action primitive (APs) to perform the activity of shifting objects. Note that the time taken for shifting the same object and the time spent within each AP varies between same and different objects . . . . .	85
5.4 Objects used to perform manipulation activities . . . . .	88
5.5 Comparison of ADLs inferred by HHMM and HHMM/SVM Hybrid Models	89
5.6 Comparison of APs inferred by HHMM and HHMM/SVM Hybrid Models	90
5.7 Confusion Matrix for ADLs inferred by HHMM Model at Level 1 . . . . .	91
5.8 Confusion Matrix for APs inferred by HHMM Model at Level 2 . . . . .	92
5.9 HHMM/SVM Hybrid Model used to infer action primitives and long term user activity using different hand and object features. The SVM classifier at the lower level classifies action primitives using hand and object features which are then used by the HHMM framework to predict the long term activities. . . . .	93
5.10 Confusion Matrix for ADLs inferred by HHMM/SVM Model at Level 1	94

5.11	Confusion Matrix for APs inferred by HHMM/SVM Model at level 2 . . .	95
5.12	Comparison of inference accuracy of HHMM and HHMM/SVM Hybrid Model when training the model with varying amount of missing data . . .	96
5.13	Activities and APs inferred by the HHMM and HHMM/SVM hybrid model when tested with unseen data . . . . .	97
A.1	Front and rear view of the power walker . . . . .	106
A.2	(a) Strain gauge installed on the handles of the walker and (b) Wheel encoders and DC motors installed on the power walker . . . . .	106
A.3	Electronics system integration on the power walker platform . . . . .	107
B.1	Front and rear view of the robotic wheelchair . . . . .	111
B.2	Electronics system integration on the robotic wheelchair platform . . . .	112
C.1	Sensor and type of data published by each player proxy nodes which is further utilised/fused with other sensor information . . . . .	114

# Abbreviations

ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AP	Action Primitives
DOF	Degrees Of Freedom
DBN	Dynamic Bayesian Network
EM	Expectation Maximisation
HRI	Human-Robot Interaction
HMM	Hidden Markov Model
HHMM	Hierarchical Hidden Markov Model
HDBN	Hierarchical Dynamic Bayesian Network
IAD	Intelligent Assist Device
L-DBN	Layered Dynamic Bayesian Network
POMDP	Partially Observable Markov Decision Process
SL	Structure Learning
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Glossary

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)	Activities of Daily Living are defined as a set of basic activities necessary for normal self-care and independent living
Human Robot Interaction (HRI)	Human Robot Interaction is a branch of robotics science that focuses on modelling, implementing and evaluating the collaboration between robotic systems and human partners
Learning by Imitation	Learning by imitation is an approach that has been used by roboticists for bootstrapping learning of robot activities based on human observation
Action Primitives (APs)	Action Primitives are pool of semantic structure that is generated by decomposing complex activity space into atomic actions

# Abstract

## A Probabilistic Model for Assistive Robotics Devices to Support Activities of Daily Living

*This thesis explores probabilistic techniques to model interactions between humans and robotic devices. The work is motivated by the rapid increase in the ageing population and the role that assistive robotic devices can play in maintaining independence and quality of life as assistants and/or companions for these communities. While there are substantial social and ethical implications in this pursuit, it is advocated that robotic systems are bound to acquire more sophisticated assistive capabilities if they are to operate in unstructured, dynamic, human-centred environments, responsive to the needs of their human operators. Such cognitive assistive systems postulate advances along the complete processing pipeline, from sensing, to anticipating user actions and environmental changes, and to delivering natural supportive actuation. Within the boundaries of the human-robot interaction context, it can be expected that acute awareness of human intentions plays a key role in delivering practical assistive actions. This work is thereby focused on the human behaviours likely to result from merging sensed human-robot interactions and the learning gained from past experiences, proposing a framework that facilitates the path towards integrating tightly knit human-robot interaction models.*

*Human behaviour is complex in nature and interactions with the environment and other objects occur in different and unpredictable ways. Moreover, observed sensory data is often incomplete and noisy. Inferring human intention is thus a challenging problem. This work defends the thesis that in many real-world scenarios these complex behaviours can be naturally simplified by decomposing them into smaller activities, so*



*that their temporal dependencies can be learned more efficiently with the aid of probabilistic hierarchical models. To that end, a strategy is devised in the first part of the thesis to efficiently represent human Activities of Daily Living, or ADLs, by decomposing them into a flexible semantic structure of “Action Primitives” (APs), atomic actions which are proven able to encapsulate complex activities when combined within a temporal probabilistic framework at multiple levels of abstraction. A Hierarchical Hidden Markov Model (HHMM) is proposed as a powerful tool capable of modelling and learning these complex and uncertain human behaviours using knowledge gained from past interactions.*

*The ADLs performed by humans consist of a variety of complex locomotion-related tasks, as well as activities that involve grasping and manipulation of objects used in everyday life. Two widely used devices that provide assistance to users with mobility impairments while carrying out their ADLs, a power walker and a robotic wheelchair, are instrumented and used to model patterns of navigational activities (i.e. visiting location of interest), as well as some additional platform-specific support activities (e.g. standing up using the support of assistive walker). Human indications while performing these activities are captured using low-level sensing fitted on the mobility devices (e.g. strain gauges, laser range finders). Grasping and manipulations related ADLs are modelled using data captured from a stream of video images, where data comprises of hand-object interactions and their motion in 3D space.*

*The inference accuracy of the proposed framework in predicting APs and recognising long term user intentions is compared with traditional discriminative models (sequential Support Vector Machines (SVM)), other generative models (layered Dynamic Bayesian Networks (DBN)), and combinations thereof, to provide a complete picture that highlights the benefits of the proposed approach. Results from real data collected from a set of trials conducted by actor users demonstrate that all techniques are able to predict APs with good accuracies, yet successful inference of long term tasks is substantially reduced in the case of the layered DBN and SVM models. These findings validate the thesis’ proposal that the combination of decomposing tasks at multiple levels and exploiting their inherent temporal nature plays a critical role in predicting complex interactive tasks.*